World Chronicle

UNITED NATIONS

PROGRAMME: No. 826 recorded 6 April 2001

GUEST: Jean-Marie Guehenno
Under-Secretary-General
Department of Peacekeeping Operations
United Nations

JOURNALIST: Joe Lauria, The Boston Globe
Evelyn Leopold, Reuters

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

UN PEACEKEEPING IN A NEW CENTURY

In a recent wide-ranging report on peacekeeping operations, it was stated that "once deployed, United Nations peacekeepers must be able to carry out their mandates professionally and successfully and be capable of defending themselves, other missions components and the mission's mandate, with robust rules of engagement, against those who renege on their commitments to a peace accord or otherwise seek to undermine it by violence." In this edition of **World Chronicle,** Jean-Marie Guehenno, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, discusses past, present and future peacekeeping missions around the world.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration: 28:00"
Executive Producer: Chaim Litewski
Director: Ivan Stoynov
Production Assistant: Corazon A. Icasas

ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues.

Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

Since 1948, there have been 54 United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Security Council has created 41of those operations in the last 12 years. Currently, there are 15 United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide. What are the challenges facing peacekeeping in the new century?

Our guest today is the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations, Jean-Marie Guehenno.

Joining me to talk with Mr. Guehenno are Joe Lauria of *The Boston Globe* and Evelyn Leopold of *Reuters*.

Mr. Guehenno, welcome to **World Chronicle.**

Ambassador, the UN Charter to the best of my knowledge does not specifically cover peacekeeping, which has become perhaps one of the most visible manifestations of United Nations activity. The late Secretary-General Dag Hamarksjold said that it was covered by Chapter Six-and-a-half of the UN Charter since Chapter Six deals with elements of maintaining peace and Chapter Seven deals with mandatory action enforcement. How did the whole concept of peacekeeping operations develop? It must have been sort of an ad hoc thing.

GUEHENNO: I think it's the opportunities of history that really created the development of peacekeeping. During the Cold War I think many states felt that it was important that local conflicts did not escalate into a major war and a number of peacekeeping operations were developed precisely for that reason. And then when the Cold War ended I think we entered a new phase. Maybe sometimes we were a bit over optimistic. We thought that everything could be dealt with by peacekeeping and so there were many, many operations. Some very successful like Mozambique for instance where really peacekeeping operations helped move that country in the right direction and some associated with tragedies, like what happened in Yugoslavia or in Rwanda. And I think now for the United Nations actually it's a unique instance in which an organization has looked at its success and failings and has decided to put peacekeeping on the right track. And that's where we stand now in a globalized age. A

feeling that there is a need for third parties to help build peace between parties that do not trust each other. At the same time there is a need for reform in peacekeeping.

LITTLEJOHNS: Assessing these more than 50 operations we've spoken about, would you say that the overwhelming majority have been successful?

GUEHENNO: I would say that the majority has been successful. I think it's always difficult when there's rarely full success of ...

LITTLEJOHNS: And of course the failures are more what's in fact visible.

GUEHENNO: The failures are more visible. That's what attracts attention. There are all the stories that people don't talk about. When you think for instance of Cambodia it was not a total success but it helped bring Cambodia to a stable situation and now we see that Cambodia is engaged in a pattern of development and the peacekeeping operation helped build that transition. When we see what we are doing now, for instance between Ethiopia and Eritrea which were engaged in a very bitter war, without a peacekeeping operation you would not have what is happening now. That is the rebuilding of trust between those two countries and eventually, in the next couple years, I would think a final peace agreement.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Guehenno, surely there's another problem and that is that once you've got UN peacekeepers in place it's difficult to get them out. Look at Cyprus. They've been there since 1964 I believe and there doesn't seem to be any early prospect of their being withdrawn.

GUEHENNO: No. Ideally, for every peacekeeping operation we would like to move in quickly, get the job done and get out. Is it a failure?

LITTLEJOHNS: How often does that happen?

GUEHENNO: That has happened quite a few times but it's true that in some instances -- and you mention Cyprus which is one of the longest going operations -- we are there but is it a failure for that reason? We do help maintain peace in Cyprus and that's important to the parties in Cyprus. So of course there is a price to that but one has to look at the alternative. And there are operations where we haven't reached a final settlement but the fact of having peacekeepers on the ground in an operation does...

LITTLEJOHNS: Prevented an explosion.

GUEHENNO: And that's important.

LAURIA: Mr. Ambassador, welcome.

GUEHENNO: Thank you.

LAURIA: Good luck in your relatively new job. You came here I suppose in October, is that when you began?

GUEHENNO: That's right. Just a few months.

LAURIA: Just six months ago. And just two months before that, in August of last year, a major report was issued on peacekeeping. The Secretary-General asked Lakhdar Brahimi to write this report. And there were many things I'd like to ask you about but time permitting I will. I'd like your overall impression on how important is this as a guideline for you and have you seen any of the recommendations? I mean it was quite a critical report. Any of them implemented such as improvement in training and the response time, and the big question is whether the Member States will provide the resources necessary to do the job. You see any movement at all on these points?

GUEHENNO: I think there is movement and your last point, will the Member States provide the support needed, is a key point. If we want to get peacekeeping right we need support. We need the cooperative relationship between the Security Council, the countries which provide the troops, the police, the flesh and blood of peacekeeping and the Secretariat that plans, supports, organizes the operations. And what the report prepared by the Commission chaired by Mr. Brahimi has done is to, I think, identify the key issues – raise the profile of peacekeeping. We saw that when there was the Millennium Summit peacekeeping figured very much at the top of the agenda and I see this report as in a way my work plan for the next two years.

LAURIA: One thing he recommends is the Secretariat should tell the Security Council, "No we can't do it if you're not going to provide the resources we need". Has that happened yet? Have we got close to this point?

GUEHENNO: When the report says the Secretariat ought to tell the Security Council what it needs to know, not what it wants to hear, it's a recommendation I think that is addressed as much to the Member States as to the Secretariat. That is, it says to the Member States don't put pressure on the Secretariat not to tell what the facts are. And I think there is a recognition, both on the part of the Secretariat and on the part of the Member States that indeed if we want to be serious about peacekeeping we have to analyze a situation in a careful way, explain what can be done and what cannot be done. Some of the failures of peacekeeping have come from a

gap that has opened between ambitions and means. And sometimes there is a danger that the international community when it's not sure it wants to act will push the peacekeeping operation even if they're not prepared to give the means.

LAURIA: Are you delivering this message to the Security Council?

GUEHENNO: I think we are delivering it loud and clear and I think it's understood and I think nobody today accepts that we can play with that. It would be too dangerous.

LEOPOLD: Let me ask you a question about a specific operation in the Congo – the vast Democratic Republic of the Congo where the United Nations has a very small peacekeeping force to supervise or pull back a disengagement of combatants. Amid this, there's going to be a report on how every single combatant, either with the government's permission or without it, has been helping themselves to natural resources, especially diamonds. What do you see? Do you see a way that the Congolese people, who for many, many decades -- starting with the Belgians and then their ruler of Mobutu -- have never had the advantages of their national natural resources, do you see any way that in the near future, they could benefit from this?

GUEHENNO: I think they will and I think such a report that is going to bring transparency to a very delicate issue, pointing to the fact of wealth that should go to the Congolese people, to the benefit of the country, is being diverted for private use by a variety of parties. I think that is a point that has to be made forcefully. Conflicts need money. You need money to buy weapons and we see that in a number of situations in Africa it is because there are diamonds, because there are natural resources that are really being stolen that conflicts can become in a way self-sustaining. And I think now in the DRC there is a recognition by all parties that there's been so much suffering in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I think people are very much tired of war and I think with a bit of leadership and international pressure and exposure – and that's where a report like the report that you're mentioning is very helpful – with that kind of pressure we can put everybody in front of its responsibilities and begin to be serious about peace in Congo.

LEOPOLD: But if the war is privatized, generals instead of a salary they're getting diamonds or whatever, what incentive is there to end it even if there is some pull back from the frontlines?

GUEHENNO: Well, I think first, if you identify, if you shame the protagonists, you put pressure because at the highest level that is not what the leaders want. So I think political pressure is useful and then there is the military dispositions on the ground. You mentioned the disengagement plan in Congo. If the troops begin to redeploy, if there is a real disengagement, then you begin to build support for a political settlement. And the idea that war is going to continue just for the private benefits of a few warlords that is not something that is politically sustainable.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Guehenno, the UN peacekeepers have only light weapons which they're only allowed to use in self-defense. This puts them at a tremendous disadvantage, does it not? Isn't it possible to give them some heavier artillery so to speak to deal with some of the very hairy situations they get into?

GUEHENNO: This is a very important point. There was a time when in a way just wearing a blue helmet was enough to ensure respect and security. We have unfortunately seen in the past decade that blue helmet, the symbol of the blue helmet, is not enough to ensure security. You have to be respected by having sufficient force to deter an attack on the UN forces.

LITTLEJOHNS: Which they do not have.

GUEHENNO: It depends. It very much depends and the lessons we have drawn from the past ten years is that we have to adopt what we call in military jargon the rules of engagement. That is the conditions under which the Blue Helmets are authorized to use their weapons. We have adopted that. I was in East Timor recently where we have a robust military force of about 8,000 troops providing for the security of East Timor. At the moment believe me, they have attack helicopters, they have a strong force to be respected, to deter attacks but there was one fine line that they will not cross. Peacekeeping is not about war fighting. We deploy a force, now we adopt the rules of engagement, we have a robust posture but we do not get into a shooting war. I don't think that the UN is suited for that. The Security Council can authorize a military operation as it did in the case of the Gulf War. Then that's a coalition of countries with UN authorization but it's not a UN peacekeeping force. For a UN peacekeeping force, it has to be respected. It has to be militarily strong, if it's needed. It should not get into a shooting war.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Jean Marie Guehenno, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations.

LAURIA: Rules of engagement is exactly what I wanted to talk about. Peacekeeping is probably the most reasonable thing the UN does and maybe the most misunderstood. It's seen as being weak, indemnibly weak. It was very much criticized in Bosnia, Sbrenica and of course Rwanda for not intervening when they may have had the means and the capability at that moment to stop civilians from being hurt. In addition to that, you don't have the equipment. In Sierra Leone the hostages were taken partly because the equipment was so bad. So my question is where do you come down? Where do you stand on the issue of intervening to protect civilians? Should that be part of the rules of engagement of a peacekeeping operation?

GUEHENNO: It very much depends on the mandate that is given by the Security Council and that's where the discussion with the Security Council is so important. We can protect civilian populations if we are given the means to protect them. I think it would be the wrong message to say that we're going to do everything if we don't have the means. Let's take the example of Sierra Leone. At the moment we are strengthening the force. For instance Pakistan has announced that it will deploy additional troops to strengthen our presence in this country and so we're going to have a force that is going to be quite robust. What does that mean? That means that the area of operation, the area in which we deploy in Sierra Leone can be extended. That means that the area in which the civilians are safe is extended so at the end of the day we do protect the civilian populations. Let's take the example of Congo. Congo is a huge country. It's as big as Western Europe. If we were to directly be mandated to protect civilian populations in Congo we would not need 3,000, we would not need 5,000, we would not need 10,000 troops. We would need hundreds of thousands to cover the whole country and we have to very honest about that. There isn't the support in the international community to provide us with a hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand troops for Congo. Does that mean that we do nothing for the civilians in Congo? I would fundamentally disagree. At the moment, as we are deploying observers along the disengagement line – take a city like Pweto. In Pweto, there's been a lot of fighting there. It's in the eastern part of Congo. It was taken by one side, retaken by the other; immense suffering for the civilian population. Ceasefire, disengagement, it means that the people in Pueto will be safe. It's a major progress.

LAURIA: Let me put you in this scenario. At the Secretariat you're in the situation room, it's late at night and you get a fax from your commander in the mission and he

says there is an impending massacre coming and could you get me 5,000 troops in the next month or so. What do you do? You know what I'm talking about of course?

LITTLEJOHNS: Nothing you can do. Is there really?

LAURIA: That fax.

GUEHENNO: What we can do is – the United Nations does not have a standing army. What we have is the Security Council and the troop contributors and the goodwill of the troop contributors. But the fax...

LAURIA: But you report to the Security Council?

GUEHENNO: We'll put the facts to the Security Council. We'll tell them what may happen and it is for the Member States then to assert their responsibilities.

LEOPOLD: You mentioned protecting civilians in Sierra Leone where there is probably the most brutal insurgency and non-ideological insurgency in all of Africa -- and I want to get back to diamonds again. The UN is starting to fan out into areas with the rebels' permission and the government is starting to take over more of the country and there's sort of a half-ceasefire. What's going to happen if you go into the diamond-mining areas because you're nowhere near there yet despite all the...

GUEHENNO: We're not so far when we are in Kenema.

LEOPOLD: Yes, but you're not there because that's why the peacekeepers were taken last May as hostages because someone thought they were getting near the diamonds.

GUEHENNO: Well, we want to deploy in strength. We don't deploy just one company isolated here, one company isolated there. So we deploy in strength in a way where we have a sufficiently strong military force to deter hostile action against the peacekeepers. I think the solution to the tragedy of Sierra Leone is there is not one single answer. Part of it is military. We have to have a force strong enough to help extend the peace throughout Sierra Leone. Part of it is political at the international level, regional efforts of the organization that groups all the Western African states, pressures on countries that would be tempted to create difficulties in the area and part of it is political but at the domestic level. Help the government of Sierra Leone not only reestablish the authority of state structures but help provide the services to the people that will make the benefits of peace more visible for everybody so that no citizen of Sierra Leone feels disenfranchised from a political process. So that's what we call ...

LEOPOLD: But until you take the diamond areas that 's not going to happen because that's what fomenting the war despite everything else.

GUEHENNO: Well, that's where the international strategy plays a role. That is the sanctions regime where the pressure to stop the trade in diamonds – it's a combination of military pressure, political pressure and political strategy with the RUF combatants. Because the diamonds let's be frank they benefit the leaders maybe of some armed groups. I'm not sure that for the average RUF combatant he sees much of it.

LEOPOLD: RUF rebels?

GUEHENNO: RUF rebels. They see much of it so that's where the political strategy is so important. If you provide them an alternative, if they can have a living which is different than just having a gun and making a living with the gun, then they may begin to think twice. And that's what we have seen when we have programmes so that they can demobilize and be reintegrated in society. And it's difficult because you need support from non-governmental organizations, from various agencies so they can go back to their village, find a way of living, could till the land.

LEOPOLD: There have been starts and stops in those programmes in Sierra Leone since the first peace agreement in mid-1999 and the attraction of the leaders for the diamonds is – you know this is small stuff to them when they can steal all those diamonds.

GUEHENNO: Yes, but the leaders are nothing if they don't have people with guns to help them assert their power. So you have to work at the grassroots level too. And that's why in our mission in Sierra Leone we have strengthened the mission by having not just the political leadership but next to the political leadership of the mission we have a development specialist who is working in close contact with the government of Sierra Leone precisely to bring together all the agencies of the UN system, the United Nations Programme for Development, the FAO, the World Health Organization – all the agencies, the non-governmental organizations, so there is a strategy to change the daily life of the people, not just to have a military strategy but to send a clear message to the people in the RUF, to the rebels that there is another life than a life with a gun. And then the leaders who get rich with the diamonds then they will see that their troops are defecting, that their troops find that after years of fighting in the bush maybe going back to a village, going back to civilian life does make sense. And we see that in all African conflicts. You have the issue of providing an alternative to a life with weapons and fighting. That's

essential. And so you have to have a military strategy and you have to have a civilian strategy so to speak. A development strategy. You have to have the two together. If you just have one leg, you fail.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador, it seems to me a fair amount of picking and choosing with UN peacekeeping operations. I have in mind the situation in Colombia where a bloody war has been going on for quite a long time. The UN has not done anything about that situation yet it's gotten itself involved into far less serious conflicts. Is it a good idea to sort of pick one here and ignore one there?

GUEHENNO: Well, to have a peacekeeping operation unless you deploy it under a Chapter 7 as we say – referring to the Charter that you mentioned earlier – you need the consent of the parties. You do it with the support of the government. In a place like Colombia there is no peacekeeping operation but there is an envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who plays a supporting role in trying to help the parties talk to each other. And so there's no peacekeeping operation but there is some UN involvement in trying to help the government of this country address the issues at hand there.

LAURIA: The United States might not like a mission in Colombia but I want to ask you a broad question. Throughout the history soldiers have either been defending their homeland or trying to take over someone else's and there's certainly a strong self-interest. With peacekeeping you have soldiers from many different countries in a third country and that motive is not there. Has that different psychology ever, do you think, caused the kind of problem like we saw between Nigerians and Indians in Sierra Leone or in going by and seeing civilians dying on the road, not stopping to help them because it's not their country and they're fighting for themselves?

GUEHENNO: Well, I must say that most of the time the experience of peacekeepers is that they have been pretty generous with their lives and with their commitment. You're right to point out that peacekeepers do not fight for their country. They fight for principles. Well, they don't fight hopefully, but they risk their lives for principles and that's the difficulty and that's the greatness of peacekeeping. That's why it doesn't make it always easy to find peacekeepers because you have to convince the countries that it is in the better interest of the international community. And presently, I think, the issue at hand is that you see a number of conflicts that do not directly threaten this country or that country but it's an ethical issue and

long-term it's a strategic issue. Do you want states to collapse? Do you want disorder to become more and more generalized? I don't think it is in the interest of anybody and that's one of the challenges of peacekeeping today.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Guehenno, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**. Our guest has been Jean Marie Guehenno, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations. He was interviewed by Joe Lauria of *The Boston Globe* and Evelyn Leopold of *Reuters*.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

ANNOUNCER: Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to **World Chronicle**, United Nations, Room S-827L, New York, N.Y., 10017.

World Chronicle is broadcast worldwide and features guests whose work is concerned with major global issues. This programme is a Public Affairs Presentation of this station from United Nations Radio and Television.